





THE STUDY  
OF  
CHURCH HISTORY

RECOMMENDED:

BEING THE  
TERMINAL DIVINITY LECTURE

DELIVERED IN BISHOP COSINS'S LIBRARY, APRIL XV, MDCCCXXXIV,

BEFORE THE  
RIGHT REV. THE DEAN, THE CHAPTER, AND  
THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM.

---

BY  
HUGH JAMES ROSE, B.D.

CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

---

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,  
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL;  
& SOLD BY ANDREWS, DURHAM.

---

1834.

**LONDON :**  
**GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,**  
**St. John's-square.**

TO THE  
RIGHT REV. THE DEAN,  
AND THE CHAPTER OF DURHAM,  
THE  
FOLLOWING LECTURE,  
PRINTED OUT OF DEFERENCE TO THEM,  
IS DEDICATED,  
IN TOKEN OF SINCERE ADMIRATION OF THEIR MUNIFICENCE,  
AND OF WARM GRATITUDE FOR  
THEIR PERSONAL KINDNESS TO THE AUTHOR.



A

## LECTURE,

&c.

---

It was my object, in my last Lecture from this place, to state the reasons which present themselves to my mind, as strongly showing the exalted nature of the study of divinity, and its superiority in the eye of reason, even when not looked at as a professional study, over many of the popular pursuits of the day. It is my wish to-day, in conformity with the objects of the office consigned, for the present, to my hands, to point out the necessity and advantages of the study of Church History, the spirit and manner in which it should be written, and in which it should be read. In the former case, I was constrained to complain of the difficulty and the extent of the subject, and I shall be fully justified in repeating those complaints

to-day. The narrow limits of time to which a Lecture of this kind is properly confined, though quite enough to exhaust your patience and my strength, are miserably inadequate to doing justice to a subject like this. The history of the Christian Church is the history of man, in the most momentous period, and on the most momentous of all points, and must consequently present a boundless field for speculation and research. In that field, we learn how the intellectual nature is advanced by the light poured on the moral being; in that field, we learn how strenuously the evil principle resists the good, how long it struggles, how slowly it retires; in that field, we learn how perilous it is to neglect or overlook great principles in practice, and how miserably corrupt practice tends to generate corrupt principles. On questions so wide, so boundless, it would be hopeless in a short address like this, to do more than cast a passing glance, and it must be my humble endeavour to tread a narrower, yet, I would hope, a not less useful path, by suggesting such advantages as may arise—not to the unwearied student, or the profound inquirer alone, but to all who will devote a fair and proper share of their time to this important study.



I must premise that in speaking of the uses of Church History, I mean its uses to *believers*; *i. e.* I take the truth of Christianity for granted. We must regard it as a gift of God to man sent into the world with a divine promise, that the gates of hell shall never utterly prevail against it; a heavenly seed which, as it cannot grow without the dew and sunshine of its own blessed climate, so has the promise of that dew and that sunshine to give it increase, but yet is to be planted, watered, watched, and fostered by the care of that frail being, for whose correction, exaltation, and redemption, it was sent into the world. In its history then we look to find the fulfilment of the promise on the one hand, and a confirmation of our faith and hope; and, on the other, while we shall see with joy unspeakable the blessings which Christianity has brought into the world, bettering man's condition in *time*, as well as directing his firm hope to *eternity*, we expect to find in the page of ecclesiastical history, fearful warnings against the misuse or neglect of those blessings, and warnings of another kind against the careless administration of the holy treasure—against the evils which may be done to nations and to centuries by the coldness or the fana-

ticism, the error, or the perverseness of a few or of one.

And, on this topic, let me cite the simple words of one whom I cannot pass unremembered to-day. "If" he says, "if the historian tells us the good deeds of the good, we are excited to imitate them; if the bad deeds of the bad, we are taught at once to avoid them, and to turn to such deeds as are really good and worthy of the God whom we serve." These are the simple words of the great father of English Church History, the venerable Bede, whose honoured tomb lies near us, and to whom it were a criminal want of reverence for piety and learning, not to allude in speaking of such a subject here.

The saint, the scholar, from a circle freed,  
Of toil stupendous in a hallowed seat  
Of learning, where thou heard'st the billow beat  
On a wild coast, rough monitors to feed  
Perpetual industry! Sublime recluse!  
The recreant soul that dares to shun the debt,  
Imposed on human kind, must first forget  
Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use  
Of a long life; and in the hour of death,  
The last dear service of thy passing breath!

First then, let us look at the necessity and the advantage of Church History in a *practical*

view, as bearing on our hearts and lives. We live in the midst of blessings till we are utterly insensible of their greatness, and of the source from which they flow. We speak of our civilization, our arts, our freedom, our laws, and forget entirely how large a share of all is due to Christianity. Blot Christianity out of the page of man's history, and what would his laws have been, what his civilization? Nay! I will not ask, what would they be, but what were they? For all that genius, and thought, and philosophy, without the spark from heaven, *could* do, that was done in Athens and in Rome. Let us never be thankless for the benefits we owe to them, nor neglect to drink whatever is pure and healthful from their plenteous fountains; but would we exchange the humblest condition in Christendom with the proudest in the land of the Gentiles? No! Christianity is mixed up with our very being and our daily life; there is not a familiar object round us which does not wear its mark, not a being or a thing which does not wear a different aspect, because the light of Christian hope is on it, not a law which does not owe its truth and its gentleness to Christianity, not a custom which cannot be traced in all its holy and healthful parts, to the Gospel. It is in the page

of Church history, and there alone, that you will see how these blessed influences grew up by painful degrees, that you will trace the gradual abandonment of evil and barbarous usages, the gradual colouring which Christianity has already given to human laws, and customs, and conditions of life, an earnest, let us hope and believe, of those fuller and more abiding fruits which, as the age of the world advances, are to deepen till the consummation of all things.

But pass we onward. In the page of Church History we read also the confirmation of our faith and hope in another point of view. When we look around us at a given moment, and see the frightful mass of evil which, even under Christianity, yet exists, and the vast tracts of regions where its name is still almost unheard, we are oppressed and borne down with the contemplation, and are tempted, in the evil spirit mentioned in the Scripture, to ask, "Where is the promise of his appearing?" But history supplies the comfort and the comment on the promise. The promise is that the gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ's Church ! Have they ever prevailed ? The promise was, that the least of all the seeds should grow till at length it became a mighty tree of rest and re-



fuge for the nations? Is it not growing? The promise was that the little leaven should leaven the three measures, and is it not working its way through them by sure, though it may be by silent, it may be by *slow* degrees? But where is the promise that these degrees should be other than slow, in the word of that God with whom a thousand years are as one day? Let us, in the page of Church History, trace the marvellous progress of the Gospel, at first, over that civilized portion of the world, which, alike by its advanced knowledge, by its sense of deficiency of some higher principle, and alas! by its deeper guilt, showed that the *fulness of time* was come. Let us, with yet deeper interest, trace its slower, but not less marvellous, progress among the barbarous hordes, the deep forests, the bloody frays, and the savage ignorance of our own forefathers, making a sunshine in every shady place which it visited. Let us see with wonder and thankfulness, that in that New World, which the restless spirit of human adventure has discovered, the Gospel has been spread through all its parts,—not indeed in its purity,—but yet, that, howsoever, Christ is still preached,—that even now India knows the name of Christ, and the distant isles of the trackless ocean own his

power. And thus, seeing, in the full and clear light of history, that he of his part hath most surely kept and performed his promise up to this very hour, we shall remember the stern rebuke of Luther to Melancthon, “*Philip, leave God to govern his own world,*” and cease to doubt and despair, that in his own good time he will accomplish his own purposes, and extend his kingdom to the ends of the world.

But let us pass onwards again. If we have doubted how far Christianity has been effectual, let us turn to history, and in another way be shamed out of our doubts. We shall find there from age to age the records of what many, frail and feeble as the race of man is, have done for the sake of the Gospel, what they have braved, what they have endured. How little indeed, till we have closely examined the records of our faith, do we know what it has cost to procure us the blessings which we enjoy as a sort of right, or as the element in which we breathe,—how many from the hour when *the Church* began her troubled existence, have toiled, and bled, and died, in order that we may meet, not in such magnificent shrines as tower over our heads, but in the lowliest and humblest shrine that human hands ever reared, there to pour forth the thanks

of a grateful heart, or to breathe the sighs of a contrite spirit, before the altar of our Father and our God.

Again, let us pass onward, and see whether the same page of history which gives us so much comfort, does not give us also very solemn warnings on very solemn subjects. I have said that we seem to think that we possess a free and pure worship by a sort of right, or as a privilege which cannot be taken from us. Yet how do we know how long this may last, if we show ourselves unworthy of the blessing? I know that there can be nothing more idle, if not more impious, than for us to affect that we can read the mystery of all God's dealings with the world, or to draw hasty and unauthorized inferences from facts. Yet it may be as guilty to shut our eyes to the light, as to strain after things beyond our vision. This, at least, is certain, that it can neither be safe nor right to shut our eyes to *facts*, to the very facts which *may* be sent as warnings. The time was, that all the northern coasts of Africa, and a large portion of Asia, rejoiced in the light of Christianity. But where is their joy, where their crown now? The name of Christ may not be named in a large portion of these regions, or it may be

named only by trembling slaves at the beck of cruel masters. It is not for man to say that this was a judicial infliction of the Almighty ; but is it for man to say that it was not ? Is the light of the Gospel a blessing beyond all price ? Is sin hateful in the eyes of God ? Is the blotting out the light of the Gospel the most fearful curse which he who knows our wants, our fears, our weakness, our sin, and their only remedies, can picture ? There the light was,—there the sin was,—and thence the light is gone. I forget not the awful warning against those who interpret the calamities sent on others in an envious and unkind spirit. But he who gave the warning, said not that the sufferers of whom he spake were not sinners, that they did not deserve their doom, and did not receive it by God's sentence. He warned us against supposing that judgments sent on others may not be sent on ourselves—against judging so clearly of other men's sin, and so blindly overlooking our own—against supposing that sooner or later unrepentant guilt will not suffer—against hoping that, except we repent, we shall not likewise perish. I will not, may not, dare not speak of our own moral and spiritual condition, or apply this to ourselves. This only may be said, that the Book



of Life contains no promise of the preservation of any particular branch of the True Vine, which will flourish in eternal youth, though branch after branch may be cut off because it is rotten, no promise that the light shall shine for ever in any particular country, that the goodness of the cause or the evil nature of those who helped to put it down, are no securities against the judgments which have been often sent on the corrupters or despisers of the truth, and often wrought by the very worst men as instruments. Does not the page of Church history, then, which contains the record of the fate and fall of the African and Asiatic Churches give us a warning which, whatever be our reliance on our own spiritual excellences, we shall do well not to neglect, remembering too that, fenced in as we imagine we are by civilization, and that mighty engine, the press, they will not avail us for an instant against the decrees of God, or prevent barbarism and ignorance from again covering the land.

But, in another respect, Church history will read this age a lesson which every age wants ; will lead it, I mean, to a due appreciation of its own position in the scale of moral and intellectual improvement. It is a foolish and mis-

chievous practice to run down the merits of the age in which we live, which, doubtless, has its own peculiar merits. But it is as mischievous to keep our eyes on those merits alone, and not to humble ourselves, as we ought, by looking at the merits of other ages and other men. We are accustomed, for example, to talk with infinite complacency of the *dark* ages, and to rejoice in our own superior light. But a familiar acquaintance with Church history might, perhaps, make us pause, and allow, that although we have our proper gifts, the *dark* ages had theirs. The task of erecting a brilliant superstructure is a great one undoubtedly, but it may be doubted whether the laying a solid foundation, one on which a hundred superstructures may successively be raised and brushed away, is not the work of a yet higher class of mind. The *dark* ages created the great institutions of this country in politics, religion, and literature. By a few broad and grand principles in Politics, springing from a deep acquaintance with the human heart, they laid the foundations of happiness for centuries of years and millions of men. In Literature they have given us, the elder Universities of this land, those noble institutions from which piety and learning and sound

knowledge have been dispensed through the land, and by which that peculiar and characteristic feature of this country, the English gentleman of middling station, has been for so long a period formed. Calumniated as they are by base slanderers now, I feel that it is the highest boast and the best confidence of this institution, that it rests on the same grounds as they do, that it springs, as many of them did, from Churchmen, and that it is formed after their pattern. Calumniated as they now are, I can breathe no warmer wish for its prosperity and its usefulness, than that centuries hence men may speak of it, as they speak of them,—that the base may hate it, as they hate them,—and that good men may thank God for the existence of a real seminary of sound learning and religious education.

In Religion, let us turn our eyes to the glorious fabric which rises in its proud magnificence above us, and forms with its kindred temples, a constant monument of the powers, the genius, and the piety of the *dark* ages. They who reared them did not sit down to count the exact cost of glorifying God ; they did not number exactly how many the holy roof would cover ; they knew that—

“ High Heaven disdains the lore  
Of nicely calculated less or more.”

And in the spirit of that higher philosophy which was in their hearts, if not on their lips, they gave all they could to God's glory, knowing that what is so given is not given in vain. Vain it has not been. No ! the human heart is not always dead, nor always cold to the higher and holier emotions. Day by day as the unceasing anthem has fallen on the charmed ear, and nave and choir have unfolded their awful perspective to the astonished eye, the heart has swelled with answering emotion ; and if an earthly as well as an heavenly book could have registered all the penitent sighs, the remorse, the love, the kindling rapture of devotion, which these holy temples have called forth and witnessed, the lowest of all the low, the Utilitarian himself, might be led to doubt, if he believed that there is another world beyond the sky, whether even the riches lavished on the abbey and the cathedral were not spent wisely and well.

But enough of this. The page of Church history tells us this of the *dark* ages, and so leads us to see that if other ages had their proper gifts, they had theirs. I draw no com-



parisons, but this I say, that those ages *created*, others criticise—they *moulded*, others alter—they *made* the old garments, others sew the new patches upon them.

And this leads me to make one more reflection on this part of my subject, namely, that an acquaintance with the great merits and excellencies of every age, obtained in a spirit of sincere piety and real philosophy, places us in a far better condition of mind for the future as well as the past. We feel—not as insulated integers, but—as constituent portions only of that Church of Christ, that communion of his people, which began when his kingdom was first set up on earth, and will go on for ever—not petty brooks flowing in feeble loneliness apart, but parts and portions of that mighty stream which is flowing down-onwards towards eternity. Thus we feel, as we ought, that as they of the old time cared for us, so ought we to care for those who will come after us, that the blessings

“ We from our fathers had in trust,  
We to our children will transmit, or die.  
This is our maxim, this our piety,  
And God and nature say that it is just.”

So far I have endeavoured to point out the kind of moral and practical lessons which we

may derive from Church history. Let me now endeavour to suggest by what modes it may assist us in matters of opinion. There is, in good truth, no way so certain to lead us to truth, no way so certain to lead us to fixed, calm, and Christian views in divinity, as the study of it by the way of *history*. If we take up a “system of divinity,” whether in the shape of a body of articles, or a regular treatise, comprising a discussion of all the great points of the Christian covenant, useful and necessary as such things are, each in its own way, yet it cannot be but that they present all these great points to us in a *controversial* view, and with a *controversial* air. This surely cannot be desirable. Our concern with the great doctrines of the Gospel covenant, is to govern our hearts, lives, thoughts, and words by them, to bring the whole man into subjection to those awful truths which God himself revealed to us in order to teach us how we are to live *here*, and how to live with him *hereafter*. Can it be well that our first acquaintance with them should be by considering them as matters of fierce and angry dispute, on which mighty spirits have been engaged on both sides, and urged for their respective views all that genius, and eloquence,

and thought could supply—that we should look at these holy truths as exercises for the intellect and the passions rather than guides of life? Yet this must be the result of our looking at them *first* in systems of theology, when we go beyond the volume of Scripture. On the contrary, if with the Bible in our hands, we follow down the stream of *history*, we are enabled to see the successive steps by which human perverseness misrepresented first one great doctrine and then another. We see how it became necessary for the Church in successive ages to reduce the Gospel doctrines to a *system*; and to present in that unattractive—nay! in the yet more repulsive guise of a controversial form, those pure and holy truths which were intended to exalt, and cheer, and guide man in his mortal pilgrimage, but which the bad ingenuity of an Arius or a Pelagius converted into sources of falsehood or error. We go on, for a time, with true comfort and joy, in the light of truth and peace, watching the effect of the great doctrines of the Gospel on the hearts and lives of mankind; and even when the tide of error sets in, our eye is firmly fixed on the truth, and we watch its conflicts and struggles, with deep sorrow indeed, but with no anxiety, because we

know that the God of truth will watch over it, and when the assaults and the wiles of its enemies have died away, will bring it forth, in its first strength and its first purity, to light and life again.

He then who should wish to study divinity with profit, would do well to commence his studies, at least, with Church history, in order that all may come upon him in its natural form—that Scripture may stand at first in its own natural loveliness, and not confined within the limits of a system of man's invention; and that, on the other hand, he may not mistake the Church by supposing that it was at her own desire, or for her own purposes, that creeds and confessions were, at first, drawn and required; but that this *indispensable* check and guide was provided gradually only, and as human perverseness and human obstinacy *necessarily* required the controul.

Let us now look to the singular use of Church history in giving us the aid of the wisdom and experience of other men and other days on great matters. In questions relating merely or principally to the concerns of this world, to philosophy and to politics, although some men may think that the light of their own



minds, and the decision of their own party, are enough to lead them all to truth; wiser, calmer, and loftier minds always feel it at once a duty and a privilege to know what have been the sentiments of the wise and the good in all ages on questions of great difficulty and of great moment for the interests of humanity. The knowledge of these sentiments gives them a friendly and wholesome warning against error, and strengthens and confirms them in the acceptance and declaration of the truth. I do not mean that our judgments on moral questions are to be referred to what is *commonly* called public opinion, for of all arbiters of human actions, public opinion, in the common sense of the word, is the most contemptible, since it usually means *the opinion of the day*, and “how begot, how nourished,” is reckoned of no consequence.

Every one, indeed, who has watched public life is aware, that the loudest voices usually come from the weakest heads, and that they are misguided either by their own ignorance and passion, or by the arts of those who have an interest in their mistakes. How constantly does it happen that a few months or a few days change *this* public opinion, the mere cry of the multitude; and that they who have bowed

to it as the proper judge of right and wrong, find that they have been guided by those who were under the influence of passion, and whose judgment would be worth nothing, even if passion had had no influence with them. In the moment of coolness and reflection, a better, a calmer, a clearer voice is heard, the voice of the wise and the good, which was drowned by the roar of vulgar passion, but is heard in its calm and steady gentleness, when the vulgar roar has died away. This alternation of passion and reason, of ignorance and wisdom, has prevailed in all ages of the world. The ignorance and the violence die away, and leave no traces behind them, except the marks of destruction. The clear and gentle voice of wisdom and truth leaves its precious records, its written and indelible monument in the successive pages of history. Violence and falsehood are inconsistent, and "to one thing constant never." In the "wrath and wreck of yesterday," may probably perish the very idol, which, to the scorn and pity of all good men, was set up by passion and folly the day before. But as the tale of truth is simple, so is it *one*. The wise and good of this day love and hate the same things which were loved and hated by

the wise and good of the last generation, by the wise and good five hundred years ago, by the wise and good of every time and country. Collect their opinions, find what the wise and good, under God's guidance, as such men are, have uniformly agreed in holding up for imitation or for warning, and then you have indeed a *public opinion*, whose voice ought to be all-powerful, and to which a ready, cheerful, and thankful obedience should be given. One of the exceeding benefits conferred by history, is, that it thus constitutes a really sound tribunal of *public opinion*. We not only *may* despise, but we are bound to despise *public opinion*, in the common sense, on so many occasions, that evil men may plausibly despise it even on the rare occasions, when it happens to speak the words of soberness and truth. But the tribunal thus set up by history, we may not despise, except at our peril, but must thankfully refer to it as the invaluable interpreter of the holy principles laid down in God's word. We shall thus avoid the evils so constantly brought down on the private lot, and on the public fortunes by making the opinion of an individual, or a party, or a generation, the arbiter in matters which have

received the decision of all wise men, of all right parties, and of all generations.

If religion then stood on no higher grounds than any other questions touching mankind, Church History would on these assume a great importance in the eyes of reasonable men. But we must remember, that as the questions which it embraces relate not to passing and perishing interests, but to *eternity*, so they must have roused the attention, and engaged the thoughts and energies of mighty minds in all ages, in a degree proportionable to their vast, their unspeakable importance, to their influence in deciding the awful question of our weal or woe hereafter. We may feel perfectly confident then that the voice of history will disclose to us the results of the careful, earnest and anxious deliberations of the best and brightest of the sons of men, on the most important and interesting questions which present themselves to the mind. But high as this raises the necessity for the study of Church History, this is far from being the whole of the case. The matters which come under our especial consideration as Christians, are not the naked offspring of human reason exercising itself upon the subject which



concerns its eternal interests, but are truths revealed to us by God himself, with this especial promise, that he will be with his Church in all ages, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the *great* truths of the Gospel. It therefore becomes of unspeakable importance, that we should know *what* truths have been held by the Church in *all* ages, because their general acceptance, combined with the remembrance of God's promise, makes them binding on us. Whatever in religion is *new*, is, *eo nomine*, *false*. Whatever in the strict sense of the words is *old*, that is, whatever has been handed down from the apostolic times through the lapse of ages to us, that is, *eo nomine*, *true*.

Had I no other reason to assign, this alone would make the study of Church History imperative in every case where men are inquiring for themselves. But besides this great and general reason, we cannot turn our eyes to controversy without becoming sensible of its *necessity*. It is the entire want of this knowledge which causes so much needless or useless controversy ; it is the entire absence of all knowledge of the necessity for it, which makes controversy constantly so disgusting. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to complain of another man for differ-

ing from you ; but no complaint can be more reasonable than that which arises from finding an opponent boldly disputing on the most difficult points, while he is utterly ignorant what has been said or done on the point before his own time, what maintained by the most illustrious men, what taught by the Universal Church. Yet in these days, when every man is, or believes that he is, fully competent to decide all the great questions of philosophy and religion for himself, *this one essential element* towards forming a right decision, is, with the singular hardihood of entire ignorance, in nine cases out of ten, wholly forgotten.

It would be impossible to adduce many instances : but one or two will sufficiently illustrate my meaning. We have had the pain of witnessing, within the last twenty years, in our own Church, the repetition of one of those fruitless contests as to certain matters touching Justification, and the other points connected more or less with man's Free Agency, which have occasionally arisen to injure and disturb the peace of every Church in Christendom. Very much was written with respect to the opinions of the Church as delivered in the Articles and the Liturgy. Some contended that the Church was clearly

Calvinistic, while others as strenuously maintained that it was directly the reverse. Others again (indeed this, painful as the supposition is, has been but too common an opinion) have been pleased to make an attempt to reconcile the two adverse parties, at the expense of the character, both of those who drew up the Articles, and of the Church itself, by supposing that such ambiguous and indecisive language was purposely adopted, that they who held the doctrine of Arbitrary Decrees, and they who rejected it, might alike subscribe the Articles. When we call on Church History to give its simple aid, what do we find to be the real state of the question? The plain truth is, that when the Articles were drawn, the doctrines of Calvin were little or not at all known, his first work advocating them having been published only the year before our Articles <sup>1</sup>. His opinions had to struggle through a very long contest even in Switzerland, before their assertor, even by that violence and persecution to which

<sup>1</sup> It is much to be regretted, that Archbishop Laurence's very valuable Bampton Lectures, so fully establishing this point, have not been more extensively read. Their title probably induced many persons to think the work controversial, and not historical.

he was not slow to resort, could establish them at home, far less propagate them abroad. The Articles, therefore, relating to the matters in question, are neither for nor against Calvin, in the common sense of the words; *i. e.* they who drew them had not Calvin in their mind, and meant, consequently, neither to oppose nor to support his opinions. The subjects of these Articles are, indeed, those by which Calvin has since become known; but they had engaged the attention of the Church for ages before Luther or Calvin were born. If the writers on these points would take the trouble to examine the works of those extraordinary persons the Schoolmen, they would find book upon book, discussing, with all the marvellous subtilty of those authors, all these very questions. But even farther than this, the doctrines treated of in these articles are those which must first and most deeply engage the thoughts of all who are considering the scheme of Redemption. We *must* make up our minds, for example, either to adopt one side or other on the great question of Arbitrary Decrees, or we must come to the conclusion that we will take the word of God as it stands, on this subject, not venturing to put any interpretation on matters beyond our



powers to discern and decide ; and that we will only decide what is to be *done* by man, and what God expects from him in practice, whatever may be the system on which that practice is demanded. Now the schoolmen *had* come to certain distinct and definite conclusions on these very points, which were taught in their schools and which entirely coloured the whole Theological System of Europe. It is not my business to canvass here the merits or demerits of their views ; but simply to state that if any one will take the trouble of reading such parts of their works as relate to the subjects treated in the Articles now under consideration, he will find at once that, instead of being directed against Calvin or for him, these Articles are directed entirely against the views of the Schoolmen. This is a very signal, and, to us, a very important instance of the use of *dates* and of historical knowledge in preventing or in settling controversies. Because the miserable disputes on these mysterious subjects grew hot among the German and Foreign Protestants *soon after* the time that these Articles were composed, and have occupied and embittered the minds of men ever since, men have ignorantly asserted that the Articles had relation to these disputes, which in

reality did not exist at the moment, and have thus forced and tortured the words of the Articles into accordance with their own views. By these sad devices, they who are more ignorant still, have, I am persuaded, been taught to undervalue and neglect the articles, and to look at them as either unintelligible, or intentionally evasive, as something which is either too obscure for common minds from the difficulty of the subject, or which was meant to be so. Whereas, in truth, nothing can, by possibility, be clearer (I do not mean than the subjects, but) than the doctrine of the Articles, if we possess the necessary key to them ; *i. e.* a knowledge of the doctrine prevailing in the general body of the Church at the time, of the language in which it was couched, and of the fact that the Reformers meant to *deny* that doctrine. It has been ingeniously said on a very recent occasion<sup>1</sup> that if we found a watch on a sun-dial without having known any thing of either before, their singular coincidence and agreement would sufficiently show that the one was *made* to suit the other. And in the same way, if we take the Schoolmen in one

<sup>1</sup> By Mr. Whewell, in his admirable Bridgewater Treatise.

hand and the Articles in the other, we find that the phraseology of the one is precisely the phraseology of the other, and that what the one positively asserts, that precisely the other positively denies. Who will assert, after observing this singular relation, that it is undesigned? Take the seventeenth Article in particular, and you may say that it does not directly contradict the notions of Calvin on predestination, which I fully allow, for the simple reason that Calvin's opinions were not thought of by the framers of the Article. But all the torture in the world can never make it assert Calvin's doctrines. The utmost which can be said is, that, while the former part holds *some* doctrine, it is not very clear what, relating to *some* predestination, it is not very clear what, the latter part is very vehement against *some* notions on the same subject. But bring the proper light to the Article, and it does not remain, as no true Christian could ever believe it would, in this discreditable state of mist and uncertainty. The Schoolmen held the doctrine—not that God, as Calvin said, foredoomed some from eternity to weal and some to woe, without consideration of their characters; but that he first foresaw what each individual would

be, and so foreknew, and then and therefore foredoomed him accordingly. Now it is this doctrine which our Article directly, clearly, and strongly opposes. The schoolmen teach the predestination of individuals. The Article teaches the predestination of the whole body of the faithful, and speaks of it as of the highest comfort, as beyond all doubt it is, that God, of his infinite mercy, has foredoomed, before the foundations of the world were laid, that all who accept the Gospel covenant shall be rescued from the curse, shall have all done for them which is necessary for their salvation by the free mercy of God, and, after a life spent in his service here, shall enter into his glory hereafter. Great comfort indeed it is, as the Article teaches, to those who feel that they are, by God's grace, living as becomes Christians, to know that by his *covenant*, made before the world began, the everlasting glory of such as die in this faith is sure and certain. Having established this point, *i. e.* the predestination of *all* faithful believers by covenant, the Article goes on to warn all men against the evil which must arise from having before their eyes the sentence of predestination as respects individuals, and to show them how certainly such a course must lead them either



to carelessness in vice, or to desperation. It concludes with one of those gentle and calm displays of quiet wisdom which are the glory and blessing of our Church. Knowing how fruitless it is for man to speculate on free-will and predestination as respects *individuals*, and having giving its warning against the vain attempt, it reminds us that it is our duty and our wisdom (without coming to any decision on what in theory it is impossible, and in practice useless to know) to take God's promises as they are set forth to us in Scripture, by them to regulate our lives, and to leave our eternal interests in the hands of Him who loves us with a love passing the love of any earthly parent, and desires above all things to bring *all* his children to his home and his bosom.

The simple knowledge then of two points,

(1.) Whose opinions the Articles intended to oppose, and

(2.) What these opinions were—  
would have saved, not only much fruitless controversy, but also much misrepresentation of the Church. It would have saved men from the error of supposing that a great Christian body, a branch of the true vine, could have thus paltered with truth and with men's consciences,

and purposely so spoken that two opposite parties could interpret its words, each in their own sense.

I will not leave this topic without adding a single word on the remarkable men of whom I have spoken—the *schoolmen*—and of the strange ignorance in which we live about them, although their opinions swayed Europe for centuries, and the marks of them are clear and open in the present day. Many an empty head, as has been truly said, is shaken at Aristotle and Plato, and many a literary quack affects to talk with scorn and pity of the schoolmen, whom he knows only by name. To such a pitch, indeed, is this unworthy method of dealing with great men and great schools carried, that one finds marks of it in the writings of those for whom one wishes to feel and to express respect. No one, I am sure, can read Sir James M'Intosh's History of England without a degree of pleasure and instruction, which make it most painful to find him elsewhere speaking with contempt of the schoolmen, and so speaking as to carry the most perfect moral conviction into the mind of his readers, that he was condemning unheard, that he was despising on hearsay, and passing judgment on works of which he had perhaps never

read a single page or a single line. I am less surprised to find the same condemnation of the Schoolmen in the works of an amiable but feeble man, Mr. Dugald Stewart, or of a more vigorous and powerful but impatient writer of the present day, Dr. Wardlaw. It is vain to suppose that men who speculate on unworthy topics, or speculate feebly on worthy ones, will command the attention and direct the opinions of centuries. And any acquaintance with the writings of the Schoolmen will fully establish that they are not exceptions to this general rule. We may say with truth that we dissent from much of their theology, and that we have laid aside much that was false in their philosophy. But they occupied themselves in no light or ludicrous contests. To go no farther, the great contest between the Nominalists and the Realists, which sprang up among them, comprehends, in point of fact, in itself all the great and important questions concerning the operations of the human mind, which have excited the attention and the thoughts of all metaphysicians since. Who will deny the schoolmen the praise of having discussed these subjects with a labour, a subtlety, and a comprehensive thought which have never been sur-

passed, perhaps never equalled? For myself I must confess that, to speak of one of these great men, I can never look into a volume of his works, and observe how he exhausts every question under his hand, surveying it at once with a large grasp and a resistless penetration, without feeling the utmost reverence for the name and the memory of Thomas Aquinas.

I have thus endeavoured to show some of the uses which we may gather from the study of Church history. And the reflections which they suggest are almost enough by themselves to fulfil the other part of my task, and show in what spirit it should be written, and in what spirit it should be read. If it is a history of God's truth, it must be written in a spirit of fervent love to him and to his truth. Nothing but that spirit will enable a writer to exercise the patience by which alone the truth can be presented in its real colours. The religion which came not to bring peace but a sword, has accomplished in every age this prophecy of its effects, and they who hate it and its authors, have always anxiously endeavoured to attribute to its inherent character the misery which has arisen from its misapplication and perversion by the frail



beings for whose benefit it was sent. It is easy to tell the bare outlines of Christian history, the persecutions which Christianity has undergone in early times, the wars which it has occasioned, the fierce struggles between Churches, “till victory sickens, ignorant where to rest,” so that the father was against the son, and the son against the father ; but it were a grievous error to think that this is the history of Christianity.

It wants a heart deeply devoted to God and his cause, to examine all these things, so that it may first see itself, and then show to others, where contests have needlessly arisen, because both were wrong, and where they were inevitable, because the evil *will* resist the good, and the good may not be stayed in its course ; *where*, in a word, and *how*, the cause of the Everlasting Gospel was promoted by the struggles and sufferings of those who loved it, *when* their partial errors delayed and obstructed its course, and *when* they at once had the privilege and the blessing of trying their own faith by the enduring of hardship and of handing down the blessing to others. For not only of individuals, but of the struggle carried on by man, under God, for the Gospel, may we say,—

That since 'tis true we only here possess,  
 These treasures but in vessels made of slime ;  
 Religion, we by consequence confess,  
 Here to be mixt of base things and sublime,  
 Of native evil, supernatural good,  
 Truth born of God, and error in our blood.

Yet gold we have, though much alloyed with dross,  
 Refining, never perfect in this life,  
 Still in our journey meeting gain and loss ;  
 Rest in our deaths, and until then a strife :  
 And as our days are want, temptation, error ;  
 So is our zeal, war, prayers, remorse and terror.

LORD BROOK.

Let any one take up Mosheim,—and I mention his name without any disrespect, for he has done whatever could be done in his way, by actually wedging and driving in one fact after another into his pages till they bristle with facts, and the heart and the imagination are alike beaten down and crushed to pieces,—and see, when one has read his careful and laborious conglomeration of facts, what more we know of Christianity, as a rule of life intended to influence both individuals and nations, gradually to operate upon laws and customs, and institutions and manners, and

gradually to cheer and bless all the sons of men.

We toil through his pages with a reluctant and weary spirit, without ever going beneath the surface, or beyond dry details, without one movement of the heart for the cause which he is recording, and with lively pleasure only when we can lay the book out of our hands. In a word, in Mosheim, there is no love of the cause, or if the *man* had a heart, the *writer* thought it his duty to overlay his feelings with dry details of barren facts, without the record of a single moral lesson to which they can lead, or a feeling which they can inspire.

It would be unjust, in answer, to say, that a work like Milner's is still worse and more useless than Mosheim, though the observation would be perfectly true. But it is true, not because Milner loved Christianity too much, or was too blind to the imperfections of those whom he thought false Christians, but simply, that he was a man of feeble powers and limited views, conscientiously, I am sure, but bigotedly attached to certain opinions, and quite resolved to find or make them every where, and to give the history—not of Christianity, but—of certain opinions which he deemed to be the whole of it.

His history, as well as Mosheim's, keeps its ground, only because there is no better to drive them from it. Mosheim's, indeed, will always be valuable as a book of reference, because he is accurate in his facts. But when a book of purer and wider Christian views than Milner's is written, his, which has no intrinsic value, and could never be appealed to by any person capable of judging for himself as an authority, will sink totally into merited neglect, with the exception of the admirable Life of Luther, written not by him, but by his vigorous and powerful-minded brother.

If again, the history of the Christian Church is the history of the one great blessing given to man, how can it rightly be written by one who has not a fervent love for mankind, an unspeakable interest in their fortunes? How can he rightly describe the infinite benefits which man has derived from the Gospel, who is totally reckless whether mankind is improving or not? How can *he* worthily deplore the yet greater blessings which man might have reaped from Revelation, but which by his own perverseness he has cast from him; in whom the misery and the sin of his brethren have never awakened a fear; from whom they have never drawn a sigh?

If it be true that the history of the Christian Church is the history of a dispensation in which a communion between God and man is carried on, and man is exalted from his low and melancholy condition, by aids and influences, which from his own grovelling heart and earthly frame he could never guard—if it is the history of high thinking, high acting, high suffering, for the sake of an unseen and spiritual principle, how can *he* write it, who believes in nothing which he cannot handle, deems all that cannot be seen an idle fancy, and would laugh to scorn the resigning such advantages as present expediency offers, for the distant good to be attained by struggling and suffering for great principles? If it be true that Christianity was sent by One who knows what is in man, can *he* write its history, who is not as fully acquainted with the human heart, as the largest grasp of philosophical inquiry, thought, and experience, can make him, and is thus duly qualified for apprehending how those marvellous hints as to the constitution of our moral and intellectual nature, which (carelessly, as it may seem to the careless eye) are scattered on the pages of the Gospel, are adapted to the nature of man, and



will operate upon him surely and powerfully from age to age ?

Perhaps I may best, in fine, show how Church history should be written, by pointing out how it should *not*, and by directing your attention to a remarkable example.

Jortin was one of the class called *liberal* and *candid* divines. There was a considerable class of these persons in the course of the last century—to the singular injury of the Church and the country. But they were the natural growth of the times. Perhaps a few words on this subject will not be thought out of place here. After our separation from the Church of Rome, a long period of controversy ensued, not only with those from whom we had separated, but (what is the natural result—I must say, the natural *evil* of even *necessary* repudiation of long established authority) controversies to a yet more fearful extent among ourselves. Yet from this evil, as in truth, by the gracious interposition of God, from all evils, there arose no small portion of good. As the Reformation had been brought on in effect by the irrepressible longing of the human heart for a spiritual nourishment denied to it at that time, so for a long period it seemed,

so to speak, to luxuriate in the free air and heavenly country into which it had struggled. The series of brilliant controversies which took place among the most gifted men, tended to rivet attention to the all-important subject to which they were directed, while this very attention animated and excited the combatants to the exertion of their best and brightest gifts. But such men could not turn their whole thoughts and powers to the consideration of religious subjects, and reap only the baneful and bitter fruits of controversial triumph. They drank of the pure stream, of the living waters of comfort, and fed on the green pastures, and they were brought forth on the paths of righteousness. The living water became a living fountain in them, “whose *only* business,” in the poet’s words, “was *to flow* ;” and flow it did, not taking heed, “of its own bounty or our need.” In Jewell and Hooker, and countless others

“Spotless in life, and eloquent as wise,”

we possess a treasure, not only of learning, and thought, and wisdom, but of overflowing piety pouring itself forth in a copiousness and richness of eloquence, such as no Church can

surpass. But these men were wholly possessed by their subject, and they consequently so entirely devoted themselves to its consideration that the great principles of religion and divinity were worked into their most inmost hearts, and became a part of their nature. They would no more have departed from them, or built their preaching, their practice, and their arguments, on any other foundation than the highest, than they would have assumed another nature. Indeed they had no temptation to do so, because from their intimate knowledge of the matter, they knew that the highest principles were the safest, nay, the only really safe, way, and they knew where the strength of those principles lay and how it could be shown. But the happy time in which these great and admirable men lived, past away but too soon. They were in possession of the Church—in one respect unfortunately. For the Puritan party which differed from them in opinion, hated them because they were in power, and it was consequently the object of that fearful party to destroy their principles and their power together. They effected their purpose, and thereby struck a blow to religious learning and piety, which though not fatal, still shows its effects down to

this very hour. No one can trace our Church history without seeing that the character of our writers is changed from the hour that the dreadful plans of the Puritans were accomplished. It is true, indeed, that some of our greatest writers became eminent after the Restoration, but they had been brought up in other days, at the feet of those Gamaliels of whom I have spoken; and with such principles to guide them, they had now the advantage (to such men it was an advantage) of being hardened in the school of adversity. But with Bull, and Taylor, and Jackson, and a few other such men, the elder school expired.

Though the ancient stock retained enough of its vigour to send forth for a short time such men as a Stillingfleet and a Bentley, this vigour soon died away. Once or twice, indeed, as in the case of Waterland, an offset sprung up, which almost recalled the memory of the ancient days. Yet even in him, while there was the same vast store of learning, the same sound judgment, or even greater, to guide it, the same reverence for Catholic antiquity, the same devotion to the subject, there wanted yet the exuberance, the warmth, the flow of eloquence, the tenderness, which fix the memory and the words of Hooker,



of Taylor, of Hall, and of Sanderson, deep in our memory and our heart. Thus Puritanism gave an effectual and permanent shock to the cheerful vigour and life of higher Theological learning, and repressed its genial current with a rude violence which it never recovered. On the Restoration, the dislike which was felt by the mass of the nation, towards the extravagances of Puritanism, at least disposed men's minds to submit with less disgust than they otherwise would, to the profligacy and infidelity which disgraced too many of the higher ranks. Infidelity, indeed, was so openly avowed, that this alone gave a new turn to the studies and thoughts of the divines of the day. It was their business to combat sophistry with sound reason, rather than mistaken dogmas with sound learning, and to this necessity we are indebted for a series of invaluable works in reply to the Deists, which have continued in almost unbroken succession to the present day. Yet while we rejoice that these works exist, there having been, and being a necessity for them, we may deeply lament, that such a necessity existed and exists. The perpetual weighing of evidences, the consideration of sophistry, the replying to fallacies, is any thing but a favourable employment for the



purifying and exalting the heart. The head it may improve ; but the intellect is but one, and a smaller portion, of that great complex, the *soul*, which is the domain of religion. The moral nature is left by this employment, but too much untouched and unimproved. The unfavourable nature of this employment of the powers of the mind was, I think, sufficiently visible in the writers of the early part of the last century. It is not, as some have said, that they ceased to hold the great truths of religion. On the contrary, they were able and willing to defend the truth, as it is in Jesus. But they did not feel that the citadel itself was in danger, or even assaulted, and therefore their attention was directed to the outworks, and they grew by natural consequence, proportionably colder, in feeling and affection, towards the citadel itself. When controversies go on for a long period, there comes over men, even men of higher mind, a most pernicious custom of putting every argument on the lowest ground. Partly to save trouble, by assuming only what the adversary *allows*—partly from a reliance on their own ingenuity, and from a confident belief that they can remain masters under every disadvantage of combat—partly, in process of time, from an

ignorance of the full extent of their subject, which prevents their knowing what they *may* assume—and then from the consequent cowardice which makes them shrink from defending what their ignorance, and that alone, makes them hold to be untenable ground, they begin by allowing all the lowest views of their lowest adversary. I readily allow, that only full acquaintance with a subject can enable a man to take high ground, or to keep it. But nothing can justify our undertaking to prosecute a great argument without a full acquaintance with it to its remotest depths. And if a writer possesses such knowledge, by what right, and with what justice does he leave the vantage ground, which he really possesses, and expose a great argument to disadvantage? It may be right enough, it may be necessary occasionally to argue with an individual in private on any grounds on which he will stand; *i. e.* if he will allow any truth; but to put forward a *public* argument, relinquishing the high grounds which may justly be taken, whether from indolence, or fear, or ignorance, is at once most injurious and culpable, injurious to the particular cause, which is thus unworthily pleaded, and injurious by sanctioning the practice of retiring quietly from great and important

truths, because they are not popular, or not allowed by our opponent, or not accounted liberal or philosophical. Such, however, was the practice of the last century, and its effects were as injurious as might well be expected. A school grew up with very peculiar and distinct features. They were acute and clear, and maintained the low ground on which they stood with remarkable dexterity and shrewdness. Terse and finished in their style, compact and complete within their own sphere, they never went beyond it. Content to dwell in decencies for ever, comprehensive views, courageous defence of high grounds, enthusiastic or even affectionate devotion to a great cause, is not to be expected from them ; but you have, in lieu, a careful survey of all the narrow ground on which they are treading ; they have marked well its towers and told all its bulwarks, and are ready for the defence of every tower, every bulwark, and every inch of ground ; and that too, a careful, judicious, and clever defence. Their maxim evidently is to give up the greater in order to keep the less with certainty and safety, a maxim often dangerous, and often impossible to practise. But besides this, the natural effect of renouncing high views one's self, is to suspect or ridicule

them in others. They who dare to hold them are considered as unreasonable, bigoted, impracticable; and what is called *common sense*, but what is, in good truth, a slavish and deliberate choice of low views instead of high ones, is made the guide of practice and the object of imitation. A good deal of humour is not an unfrequent attendant of this calm and cautious condition of mind, and this is used as freely in ridiculing what are considered the overstrained views of friends, as the falsehoods of foes. The inevitable consequence of this is a most unwholesome tone of mind, disposed to consider every thing which is not commonplace, as extravagant; every thing bold, as rash; every thing generous, as foolish; every thing like inflexible adherence to principle, as bigotry and violence. To fight for principle, in the eyes of such persons, can arise only from madness or wickedness; and they use the warfare of ridicule or censure accordingly.

If we wish for any proofs of this, and of the harm done by it, let us look to the notions entertained as to Church Government in the present day, which are to be ascribed wholly to these writers. Hooker, and Hall, Sanderson, and Pearson, and Leslie, dwelt with the ut-



most earnestness on the Episcopal office and the Ministerial Commission, as *necessary* for the due possession of the Sacraments by the people. They taught plainly that priests were nothing *by themselves*,—that their value is derived from their *office*, and from the commission to minister in their Master's name which that office gives, and that Laws can no more make a Priest than they can make a Sacrament. And Hooker, and Hall, and Pearson, and Leslie, were not thought either ignorant, or foolish, or extravagant. But when the new school had possession of the divinity of the Church, and such men as Hoadley (the lowest minded of all low minded men) of its high stations, Hooker, and Hall, and Pearson, and Leslie, were corrected by Balguy and Powell, and taught that one form is just as good as another; that the Church is a sort of club, which must have some laws and some orders, because even a club cannot go on well without, but that the laws of one club are as good as those of another. They were taught that the directions of the Apostles, and the constant and undisputed practice of the whole Church of Christ for fifteen centuries, cannot be of any consequence, if *we* think in our wisdom that a Church can subsist without a Bishop, and a priest without ordination;



that the state can manufacture ministers of God's word at its own pleasure, and after its own fashion; and that they are fully qualified to dispense the word of life, and the sacraments of the Gospel. Talk to too many churchmen, and find whether this is not too often their notion. Consider how such miserable degradation entered at all into the Church which once heard the truth from Hooker and Pearson, and be assured that it was let down by degrees through this clever, low minded race of divines, who made it their boast and pride to take what they called the *common sense* and *tangible* view of every question, and laughed down every one who believed and taught that there are things, which we can neither touch, nor taste, nor handle, as necessary to our spiritual life as the air we breathe, and as true as the truth of God. I must not stay to describe the effects of this low-minded and tangible divinity farther than to say that we owe to it, and to the ignorance of the real meaning of the words *Church* and *Commission* of the clergy, which it caused but too generally, what is one of the greatest curses of Protestantism, the setting up *preaching* above *prayer*, the gratification of the itching ear above the elevation of the careless heart, the magnifying the *man* and despising

his *office*, the monstrous and godless belief tacitly indeed, but firmly, held, that we derive a greater share of the covenanted gifts and graces of God's spirit, accordingly as we happen to be more or less pleased with the *elocution*, or *style*, or *manner* of the PERFORMER.

This was an unintentional consequence of their views and proceedings, but a natural one. They had no evil intention of any sort—they were only contented to keep, on the lowest terms, such a condition of things as they found, and found tolerable. Their wish was to appear reasonable, as if the highest truth was not the highest reason. Their wish was to be *candid* and *liberal*; *i. e.* to declare, that they who are in power are always wrong, and that they who oppose them are always right; always to decide for what was new against what was old, for what was expedient against what was on principle, for what was convenient against what was generous, for what, in a word, put it as we will, was low-minded and selfish, and worldly, against what was lofty, and noble, and heavenly.

Such men could not write a history of the Christian Church, for that is the history of the progress and struggles of Christian truth, and they had no fond or overflowing love for it. They

could not write a history of the Christian Church, for her proud, and happy, and holy days are her primitive days; and they had no reverence, and no love for primitive antiquity. They could not write a history of the Christian Church, for that is the history of stern principle, and lofty bearing, and zealous faith, and glowing love, and angelic devotion; and they could only sneer and scoff at what, judging from their own cold hearts and decent lives, they would deem to be the fancy of the visionary, or the fond dream of the lonely student.

Of this school came Jortin<sup>1</sup>, and to me he seems to unite every quality which ought to have forbidden his ever touching the pen of the historian. It would be enough to mention, when one considers the high moral qualities which an historian ought to possess, that there is nothing coarse and loathsome on which he does not dwell with the greatest pleasure—and that his language is throughout offensive and vulgar

<sup>1</sup> I speak of Jortin in this way with deep regret, and in the full and serious remembrance of Dr. Parr's anathema against those who assail him. To speak ill of the dead, especially of so elegant a scholar as Jortin was, must always be painful, even where, as in this case, it is a duty to the living to warn them against error and mischief.

to the greatest degree. It might be enough, when one considers how large a grasp an historian ought to be able to take, that Jortin had but one narrow common place view, which is repeated ten thousand times over; viz. that heretics were always right, or at least excellent people, that they who opposed them were always in the wrong, or at least bigots and tyrants, who put down argument by force. Page after page, we have to go through with a weariness which can hardly be described, the regular common places, that men should always listen to argument, and that persecution is very bad, and freedom very good.

One might, however, endure this with some patience; but there are far graver charges behind. If Gibbon is a book likely to injure Christianity in a young mind, Jortin will do ten thousand times more harm. Gibbon's insinuations are so covert and so veiled, that it often requires a long sight and a large view to understand all their malevolence and mischief. Jortin's sneer is open, plain, and perfectly intelligible. It is true that Jortin's sneer is not against Christianity itself but against particular persons, whom he chooses to think

bad Christians. But how can Christianity itself escape in the mind of a young and careless reader, where the words which describe its highest and best qualities are always joined with conduct either disgraceful and odious, or ridiculous and contemptible? What notion can be formed by a young reader, at least, who finds in every page, an account of *pious knaves, and godly knavery, and political godliness, and crazy piety, and frantic enthusiasm*, except this, that the profession of piety is usually made by hypocritical or weak men? This alone would be sufficient to condemn Jortin finally and hopelessly. He who *could* write all this as he does, could have no real notion what the Gospel really is, and, consequently, no earnest wish that others should know.

But besides this, there is not a holy or wholesome emotion which Jortin does not condemn. Praying at the tombs of the martyrs, for example, was one of the *fooleries*, as he says in his coarse phraseology, which the fathers should have restrained. The fathers knew better, knew more of the holy emotions of the heart, more of man and more of God. They knew full well, what Jortin did not know, that



More sweet than odours caught by him who sails  
 Near spicy shores of Araby the blest,  
 A thousand times more exquisitely sweet  
 The freight of holy feeling, which we meet  
 In thoughtful moments, wafted by the gales  
 From fields where good men walk, or bowers wherein they  
 rest.

And even if they had foreseen the excess and perversion of this natural and wholesome feeling in after times, they knew what Jortin did not know, that it is bad philosophy to renounce the exercise of the best and most wholesome feelings of our nature, because some men pervert and abuse them.

But last of all, certainly not least, perhaps greatest, Jortin had no love for human nature. He had that knowledge of it which some call a knowledge of the world, *i. e.* the knowledge which Voltaire and Rochefoucault had—the knowledge of whatever is petty, and mean, and selfish, the shrewdness to perceive, and the humour to set it in a ridiculous light; but the depths of the heart neither he nor they ever could see. The moral depravity of the one, and, I presume, the cold heart of the other, alike prevented them from seeing what strength the

human heart, when purified and exalted by God's grace and Spirit has, what it can do, and what it can endure—from sympathizing with its bold struggles and its patient endurance.

Such was Jortin as an historian, and I could hardly describe a good Church historian better than by saying, that he ought to be exactly what Jortin *was* not.

But last of all, in what spirit shall Church history be read?

Shall it be read in a thankless and careless spirit, which thinks little of what God has done for man, and cares little what he will do? Shall it be read in an infidel spirit, which though like the devils it may *believe*, yet believes in vain, believes the outward facts, but doubts their inward influence? Shall it be read with a cavilling spirit, with the unchristian spirit, which never believes good, where it *can* suspect evil, which attributes every act to the lowest motive by which it could be effected, and will not think that God himself ever has raised man, ever can raise him above the low, selfish, level on which it stands itself? Shall it be read with the wish to sneer at every thing that is noble, and generous, and lofty, to disbelieve in every thing like self-

denial, self-forgetfulness, self-devotion, to brand it as enthusiasm and folly ?

Not so ! So studied it cannot enlarge or exalt our views, cannot confirm our hopes, cannot stimulate us to more steady, consistent action. But if, with a confident belief in the truth of the Gospel, an affectionate love for its Author, a zeal for its progress, and a full and earnest belief, that in the Word of God are laid down the principles which are to guide man to truth, and to the right propagation of it, we turn to ecclesiastical history, we there find the comment we desire. We find not, indeed, miracles worked day by day to convert either individuals or nations, not a rapid progress, not a sudden change worked in generations or countries, but a progress, slower indeed, or more rapid, according to the zeal of the instruments which God is pleased to employ—still a progress, such as to show the superintending power of a Divine Author, guarding and fostering his own work. We find awful judgments and warnings to nations, how they dare to trifle with the cause of God, or with the truth of God ; warnings to individuals of the fearful consequences, to themselves and to others, of heresy and schism, of

waywardness and abandonment of the great and general voice of the Church for their own fond imaginations and evil tempers. But we find there too bright examples of saints and martyrs—of men of whom the world was not worthy—who have done all and suffered all that men could do and could suffer for that one blessed cause, and in so doing and so suffering have found an elevation, a peace, and a joy, which nothing could give but the sense of God's presence, and the influence of God's Spirit, blessing his own servants in doing his own work. So warned and so cheered by the voice of Scripture and the comment of history, we shall betake us each to our humble path of duty with a clearer conviction of duty, a stronger sense of the danger and the guilt of neglecting it, a firmer hope of a blessing, a more cheerful and animating view of the prospect before us. We shall say with the poet—

Why sleeps the future like a snake enrolled,  
 Coil within coil, at noontide ? For the Word  
 Yields, if with unpresumptuous faith explored,  
 Power at whose touch the sluggard shall unfold  
 His drowsy rings. Look forth ! that stream behold,  
 THAT STREAM upon whose bosom we have passed,

Floating at ease, while nations have effaced  
Nations, and Death has gathered to his fold  
Long lines of mighty kings. Look forth, my soul !  
(Nor in this vision be thou slow to trust)  
The living Waters, less and less by guilt  
Stained and polluted, brighten as they roll,  
Till they have reached the Eternal City—built  
For the perfected spirits of the Just !

THE END.



